

STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

MARCH 13TH, 2006

Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Governor Chris Gregoire, Glenn Anderson, Frank Armijo, Dr. Terry Bergeson, Charley Bingham, Amy Bragdon, Denny Heck, Eric Liu, Rosemary McAuliffe, Victor Moore, Dave Schmidt, and Bob Watt.

Governor Gregoire convened the meeting of the Washington Learns Steering Committee at 8:45 am on March 13th, 2006.

As the first order of business, Governor Gregoire made a motion to approve meeting minutes from the February 13th 2006 Steering Committee meeting. The minutes were unanimously adopted by the Steering Committee.

Picus and Odden presented a general overview of the methodology of the evidence-based model. They summarized the criteria for the successful schools model and explained that their work consisted of summarizing data gathered. Members of the committee requested further information on identifying how successful districts were spending their funds. In addition to identifying successful districts in this state questions were posed regarding whether other states and counties would be looked to for successful models. Specifically, the example of Ireland was mentioned as a system that has redesigned its elementary schools.

K-12 Advisory Committee member Bette Hyde presented a general overview of the evidence based model and provided a synopsis of questions relating to the model. Questions were raised in relation to the model regarding content and process issues; the scope of the model, elements it was missing and how elements interrelate and are the most impactful; how much specificity and directness we have from the state; and questions regarding whether the model would stand the test of global competitiveness.

Next the Governor provided a legislative update, which included a summary of Washington Learns key legislative successes. The Governor highlighted key legislative successes including the creation of a cabinet-level department of early learning and investments in early learning; the passage of legislation to ensure seamless transitions between sectors, including a longitudinal student data system; and legislation creating alternatives equal in rigor to the WASL. The Governor affirmed that the yardstick of success for Washington Learns would be the focus on students and student successes.

The committee had a dialogue with two groups of students representing the K-12 system and Post-Secondary institutions. The first group of K-12 students included

Jessica Boyd, Secondary Options High School in Tumwater; Arielle Cawston, Olympia High School; Joy Lehnis, Timberline High School; Allexiis McLean, Granview High School; Zain Paloato, Manson High School; and Cody Traube, Kalama High School.

The second group of higher education students included Shae Savoy, Seattle Central Community College; Consuelo Guijosa, English as a Second Language, South Puget Sound Community College; Nick Peyton, Master of Public Administration, University of Washington; and Garrett Havens, senior at Eastern Washington University.

Questions for the K-12 student panel posed by the committee members and the student responses to these questions are as follows. In many cases students were speaking on behalf of themselves and their peers.

Q: Why are so many students dropping out of high school?

- Some students do not feel engaged in their program and do not feel that they have an individual path
- Lack of consistent mentoring/counseling through all 4 years of high school
- Some students learn how to take the WASL through 10th grade. In the junior/senior year of high school they have taken the WASL and subsequently lose interest and drop out of high school.
- Students do not understand the consequences of dropping out and feel that life is going to be easy
- Students who have discipline issues are often subject to lower expectations from teachers/faculty. Consequently, they often drop out based on those expectations.

Q: Do you feel that you are prepared for the WASL? How about your friends?

- One student had just taken the WASL and indicated that she felt adequately prepared. However, she testified that some of her friends and peers were nervous about not passing and did not feel they had the tools to succeed. The student spoke to the fact that some students were not good test takers and therefore often had performance anxiety on individual subject tests such as math; a test of the magnitude of the WASL was therefore intimidating to these students who did not perform well on traditionally standardized tests. Also mentioned was the fact that review sessions for the WASL were scheduled at some schools when high school athletic teams were absent.

Q: How do you best engage parental interest/participation in school?

- One-on-one connections with teachers and administrators

Follow-up question included:

Q: Are there "homecalls" in which teachers visit individual students?

- One student stated that not all students would initiate parent involvement or “homecalls”, but none the less thought it was important. Consequently, schools should not rely on students to be the liaison between teachers and parents.

Q: What would you focus on to make the system better?

- Individualized learning plans
- Smaller schools, including middle to high schools
- More mentoring programs
- High School and Beyond Plans
- Ensuring that every student can write through intensive writing classes in both history and English.

Q: What part of the education system has unlocked passion?

- Music and participation in orchestra/band; other extracurricular activities. Traditional academic activities were not mentioned.

Q: How many of you have more than 2 hours of homework? Less than 2 hours of homework?

- All students indicated that they had fewer than 2 hours of homework.

Q: How many of you are bored at school? If you were not able to participate in any extracurricular or after school activities how many of you would be bored?

- All students answered yes to the latter question

Questions for the Higher Education student panel posed by the committee members and the student responses to these questions are as follows:

Q: What is your single biggest post-secondary educational challenge?

- Mathematics and lack of successful preparation for higher education mathematics
- Lack of diversity and the challenge that classmates do not reflect diverse population
- Costs and related concerns regarding lack of funds to pay for the cost of education.

Q: What do you wish that they had told you in high school to prepare for post-secondary education?

- To successfully complete more Mathematics and English courses. Some students expressed that they were forced to take remedial courses because they were not adequately prepared for college-level work.

Q: What would you change about your high school education?

- Put more of a focus on writing, many students cannot write well.
- Change the focus on “busy work” or filling out worksheets

Q: What was the most significant difference between teachers that you had in high school and college?

- The enthusiasm that they bring to teaching and interest/background in the subject they are teaching. Professors that have written extensively on a particular subject and have expertise are often more able to communicate this enthusiasm to the classroom.
- Respect for students and emphasis on community learning
- Student centered learning
- Lack of “busywork” including worksheets that have limited education value or relevance to the curriculum

Q: What can the K-12 system do to improve learning for students?

- Give students more options such as offering different classes to obtain credit for required courses
- Increased community involvement
- Communicate to students that learning is important and the key to social mobility
- Taking into account different learning styles and opportunities for creative learning which engages all the faculties (i.e. kinesthetic, visual and audio learning techniques)
- More opportunities for one-on-one interaction with adults/mentors

The Chairs of the Advisory Committees provided an update on their work to the committee.

Chair Denny Heck reported on behalf of the Higher Education Advisory Committee, stating that the group was quickly moving forward and would soon be reviewing NORED’s New Index model of peer states—a new way to rank or measure Washington State’s performance nationally.

Chair Terry Bergeson reported on behalf of the K-12 Advisory Committee. She updated the committee on the status and work of the subgroups, noting that the Transitions subgroup had been working with the Higher Education Transitions group. The focus of

the K-12 Advisory Committees work is currently on Picus and Associates Evidence Based and Successful School District model studies.

Chair Bob Watt thanked Governor Gregoire and legislators for their work on the Department of Early Learning bill. He also provided an update on the work of the subgroups, including the Regulations TAC and the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) Subgroup.

The meeting opened up for public comment.

The meeting adjourned.